

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH PIERRE SALINGER

OCTOBER 25, 1962

12:05 PM EDT

THURSDAY

MR. SALINGER: We will go forward. We have an exchange of letters between the President and Secretary of Commerce Luther Hodges, dealing with the disposition of \$165 million of funds contained in the Public Works Appropriations Act of 1963 and their allocation.

Q. This isn't all the money, is it?

MR. SALINGER: It is not all the money.

Q. Do you remember how much that was? \$900 million?

MR. SALINGER: I believe it is \$900 million.

Q. \$400 million.

MR. SALINGER: \$400 million, yes.

Q. \$400 million appropriated.

MR. SALINGER: We put out this morning a list of 11 bills that the President signed. That was the last of the bills. I thought you might be interested in a run-down on the bills. This completes action on bills for the Second Session of the 87th Congress. The total number of bills signed by the President was 884. That is 308 Senate Bills, 576 House Bills. And breaking down, that is 484 Public bills and 400 private bills.

Q. How many private?

MR. SALINGER: 400. The President vetoed 12 bills, four public bills and eight private bills. Five of the vetoes were regular vetoes and seven were pocket vetoes.

I can give you a composite for the entire 87th Congress. This brings the action for the 87th Congress to a total of 1569 bills signed by the President and 20 vetoed. That breaks down to 885 public bills and 684 private bills. For those who are historically minded and want to compare it with the 83rd Congress, which is the first Eisenhower Congress, he signed a total of 1782 bills, which is some 213 bills more than President Kennedy, but the breakdown shows that he signed 105 less public bills. He only signed 780 public bills, and a total of 1,002 private bills compared to President Kennedy.

Q. Did you say 785?

MR. SALINGER: 780 public bills and 1,002 private

Q. Pierre, do you know which was the last bill the President signed? Is it the last one on the list?

MR. SALINGER: The last one on the list would be the last one.

Q. Any other exchange of letters, Pierre?

MR. SALINGER: Between who?

Q. Anybody. The President and Premier Khrushchev?

MR. SALINGER: When I have anything on that I will give it to you.

Q. Has there been a reply to the Secretary General?

MR. SALINGER: That reply is being completed and I expect it to go forward in the next hour or so.

Q. The next what?

MR. SALINGER: The next hour or so.

Q. Which reply is that?

MR. SALINGER: The reply to U Thant.

Q. When will it be released?

MR. SALINGER: I don't know when it will be released.

Q. Where will it be released?

MR. SALINGER: If it is released, I expect it to be released here.

Q. When you say to go forward, you mean to go where?

MR. SALINGER: To the Secretary General.

Q. Pierre, these briefings around the country are being held under the auspices of the State Department. While the Administration cannot tell Congress what they can or cannot say, were the Congressmen asked not to divulge the contents of the briefing that they were receiving?

MR. SALINGER: I would think you ought to direct that question to the State Department. They are conducting the briefings.

Q. We were told at the White House that any information about these matters would come from the Defense Department. It is not coming from the Defense Department and it is not coming from the White House or the State Department. It is coming from the Congressmen.

MR. SALINGER: The Defense Department has made a statement in the last 15 minutes.

Q. Will they make it after these briefings or will they make it before?

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Q. Did you say 785?

MR. SALINGER: 780 public bills and 1,002 private bills.

Q. Do you have the vetoes?

MR. SALINGER: He vetoed 52 bills in the 83rd Congress.

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MR. SALINGER: The Defense Department has made a statement in the last 15 minutes.

Q. Will they make it after these briefings or will they make it before?

MR. SALINGER: I just said the Defense Department has made a statement in the last 15 minutes. So far as the ground rules under which the briefing in New York was held, to which you are referring, I would suggest you ask the State Department what the ground rules were.

Q. Tell us what the Defense Department said.

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MR. SALINGER: I prefer you get it from them.

Q. But we have been waiting on you here. Just go ahead and tell us so we will know what to ask you.

MR. SALINGER: I will not amplify on the Defense Department statement. I would be glad to tell you OFF THE RECORD --

Q. Does that put it off --

MR. SALINGER: I don't want to be quoted on it, that is all.

* * * * *

Mr. Sylvester put out a statement saying that a dozen or more Soviet ships have turned back or changed course; that these ships were all ships which we had indications of or suspected carried material which was contraband and under the terms of the President's Interdiction; that a Soviet tanker was permitted through the blockade this morning after the Navy satisfied itself that it was not carrying any material which was contraband material.

Q. If Congressman Van Zandt had not released this, when would the Pentagon have released it?

MR. SALINGER: I can't tell you that.

Q. Did the Pentagon say whether the Navy satisfied itself by searching the Soviet ships?

MR. SALINGER: The Defense Department did not spell out how the Navy satisfied itself.

Q. The point I am making, Pierre --

MR. SALINGER: I am fully aware of the problem, Sandy. I don't mind discussing with you OFF THE RECORD. I am not going to put it on the record. You can get anything you want from the State Department. If a Congressman receives an off-the-record briefing, which it was in New York, and then goes out and tells everybody about it, I think it violates the rules of the briefing. The way we have set it up is for information to come out from the Defense Department. That is still our intention.

Q. The point I am making is that the Pentagon did not break the information until after the Miami News broke the story. There was nothing that came out today until a Congressman broke the story. What I am trying to pin down is: Is it the Government's policy that these things will not come out unless they are revealed by someone else?

MR. SALINGER: That is inaccurate.

Q. I didn't make a statement. I asked a question.

MR. SALINGER: The question has a premise in it which is inaccurate. You are suggesting that we are not going to put out these things --

Obviously there was a considerable delay --

MR. SALINGER: Jack, again OFF THE RECORD because I am not going to discuss the subject on the record, there are many, many factors involved here which would have to be taken into account not only in the decision as far as the ship is concerned, but the decision on the announcement. This is a very serious problem.

Q. Was this announcement held up until after the meeting of the Executive Committee, the National Security Council?

MR. SALINGER: That was one of the factors.

Q. Mr. Secretary, are there going to be any further briefings of Congressmen around the country?

MR. SALINGER: There are five scheduled today around the country.

Q. Are you back on the record?

MR. SALINGER: No, I am OFF THE RECORD.

Q. Pierre, on the record, in view of this announcement, you would say, then, that the United States' quarantine is successful?

MR. SALINGER: I wouldn't make any comment about it.

Q. Pierre, off the record again, did Sylvester say or can you say whether these 12 ships were sighted or turned back before they reached the area of the blockade?

MR. SALINGER: He did not say, but they did turn back before they reached the area of the blockade.

Q. In this connection, under the voluntary self-censorship -- that is pretty close to it now -- are Congressmen responsible people that we can use and quote without getting into trouble under it?

MR. SALINGER: I can't be held accountable. OFF THE RECORD, because I don't want to get into this subject, but I would just say that you are all well enough aware of Congressmen's desires to make statements from time to time and it is hard for us. We have no control of what they say. I couldn't find fault with any newspapers that quoted a Congressman.

* * * * *

Q. Pierre, can you tell me whether there is a direct telephone between the White House and the Kremlin? If so, has it been used --

MR. SALINGER: There is not.

Q. Has it been used or is there a plan to use it?

MR. SALINGER: There is no such telephone.

Q. Does that put it off --

MR. SALINGER: I don't want to be quoted on it, that is all.

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MR. SALINGER: The question has a premise in it which is inaccurate. You are suggesting that we are not going to put out these things --

Q. I asked you is it the policy.

MR. SALINGER: It is not.

Q. Why was the delay in putting this out today, then, Pierre?

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MR. SALINGER: There is not.

Q. Has it been used or is there a plan to use it?

MR. SALINGER: There is no such telephone.

Q. Pierre, the Soviet tanker permitted to go through the blockade, was it stopped and then permitted to go ahead?

MR. SALINGER: Get the wording used by Mr. Sylvester.

Q. You said off the record that 12 turned back before they reached the line. Does that mean there is a line?

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MR. SALINGER: I am not going to comment on that.

Q. Was that off the record?

MR. SALINGER: What?

Q. That the 12 turned back before they reached the blockade?

MR. SALINGER: Anything on this statement that Mr. Sylvester made I am just giving to you for your information. You can get it from him. He made an on the record statement which can be quoted.

Q. But, Pierre, on that question about the area, as they have to publicize the area in order that the ships will be forewarned, can't you tell us what the area is?

MR. SALINGER: No, I cannot because we have never spelled it out.

Q. Is there such an area of any kind?

MR. SALINGER: Again OFF THE RECORD

* * * * *

if I can say this to you, Ned, we said that we are going to take action to stop these ships from getting to Cuba. We have not said where we are going to take the action and we will not say where we will take the action.

Q. The President's statement the other night said the Secretary of Defense would establish --

MR. SALINGER: Could establish. I am not saying whether he has or not.

Q. But he declined to say where it is, too.

MR. SALINGER: And we will continue to decline.

Q. Can you say whether the 12 ships that Mr. Sylvester said were turned back were in addition to the six of yesterday?

MR. SALINGER: It included the six.

Q. Now on international law --

MR. SALINGER: I am not going to argue international law with you, Ned. I have told you what we are doing.

Q. Can we quote you on that?

MR. SALINGER: No, you can't quote me on anything on this subject.

Q. You are the chief information officer in this government. You are the press officer to the President of the United States. What I am trying to find out is an answer to this question: Would this government release

MR. SALINGER: There is no embargo that I know of.

Q. You were planning to release this information?

MR. SALINGER: As it becomes available to us, and as it is taken in the larger context of the problem involved.

Q. If you spell that out, would that mean that --

MR. SALINGER: I am not going to spell it out. I am just saying that the policy is that we will let you know what has happened.

Q. Without undue delay?

MR. SALINGER: Taking into account the situation as it is developing.

Q. Going back on the record --

Q. Is this still OFF THE RECORD?

MR. SALINGER: Yes.

Q. Can we have a reading on who made the official decision that the weapons in Cuba are offensive? Was that the Pentagon or the CIA, or how was that done?

MR. SALINGER: I think the President has made that very clear in his statement. I wouldn't go beyond that.

Q. Is it reasonable to assume that all ships of all countries will be turned back or stopped?

MR. SALINGER: You are getting into questions which were answered in great detail at the Defense Department briefing after the President's speech. I wouldn't want to go beyond what they said, both the Defense and State Departments.

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Q. Pierre, I understood you to say yesterday that the reply to the Secretary General would not be made public.

MR. SALINGER: I didn't say that. I never made that statement.

Q. It will be made public?

MR. SALINGER: I didn't say that either.

Q. I am asking.

MR. SALINGER: I can't tell you whether we will or will not make it public.

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MR. SALINGER: The answer to that question is yes.

Q. There is not going to be an embargo on confrontation of these things?

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Q. What is the status of the reply to Bertram Russell?

MR. SALINGER: We haven't found the message from him yet.

Q. Has the President been in touch with the heads of any other friendly government in the last 24 hours?

MR. SALINGER: I couldn't comment on that.

Q. Is there any reaction to the published accounts of Premier Khrushchev's message to Bertram Russell, with the

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suggestion for a summit meeting?

MR. SALINGER: No.

Q. Pierre, on a noncontroversial point, has the President sent any message to John Steinbeck?

MR. SALINGER: I am not aware that he has.

Q. Are you saying that the White House has not received the Bertram Russell message?

MR. SALINGER: That is what I am saying yes. We have not located it in the White House yet.

Q. Pierre, to pursue that point --

MR. SALINGER: Can I just finish? I might say that the President has received, since his speech, some 48,000 telegrams.

Q. It could be in one of them.

Q. Is the ratio the same?

MR. SALINGER: It has gotten quite a bit greater, the ratio, than the one I have you before. The ratio is running about 22 to 1 in favor of the President's position.

Q. What about mail, the letters?

MR. SALINGER: We haven't gotten to them. We are still digging out from under the telegrams. The mail is very heavy.

Q. Pierre, to return to the Bertram Russell telegram and your statement that "we haven't even found the message from him yet", it used to be White House protocol, and I am asking whether it is still, that persons who address telegrams or communications to the President and then made them public before they were received did not receive a reply.

MR. SALINGER: I couldn't tell you that.

Q. I wondered if that is what you were getting at when you made that remark.

MR. SALINGER: No, I didn't have that in mind when I made that remark.

Q. Pierre, I understand Senator Hayden did not come to the briefing yesterday. I wonder if you can tell us if you know why.

MR. SALINGER: I will have to check that. My understanding was that he was there.

Q. I don't think so.

MR. SALINGER: I will check it.

MR. SALINGER: The question was about the president of Westinghouse, whether we have any reason to believe that he is bearing a message.

We have no such information.

Q. Has he asked for an appointment with the President?

MR. SALINGER: He has not.

Q. There are several other Congressmen, I believe, who may have seen the President or will see him today. Can you tell us who they are?

MR. SALINGER: I don't know of any Congressmen who will see the President today.

Q. Can you give us the President's schedule?

MR. SALINGER: He will be in meetings most of the day with various people.

Q. All people within the government?

MR. SALINGER: So far as I know.

Q. You are going to put out no schedule?

MR. SALINGER: No, sir.

Q. Is he working on anything other than the Cuban problem?

MR. SALINGER: Of course he has to keep up with his other work. I think the Cuban problem is taking up the greatest percentage of his time.

Q. Pierre, yesterday you told us that it was expected that the President was going to reply to U Thant last night. Now it is mid-day and you say they are getting a reply finally worked out. Has there been any reason that you can talk about for the delay? Was there confusion about what he was going to say?

MR. SALINGER: No, the President decided last night to hold off on the reply until today.

Q. Pierre, has anything happened in the last 24 hours that has encouraged the President with regard to a solution on this problem?

MR. SALINGER: I wouldn't want to comment on that.

Q. Has there been any communication between the Secretary General and the President, or vice-versa?

MR. SALINGER: I answered that question already.

Q. What was your answer?

MR. SALINGER: I said when I had any information

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Q. Do you have any reason to believe that the president of Westinghouse who saw Mr. Khrushchev is on his way back and has a message for the President?

MR. SALINGER: No, I --

Q. What was the question?

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MR. SALINGER: I said when I had any information about that I would let you know about it.

Q. You didn't say there had been any.

MR. SALINGER: I said when I have information to give you on that subject, I will give it to you.

Q. Do you?

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MR. SALINGER: I don't.

Q. Are you saying that there hasn't been any communication?

MR. SALINGER: I stand on my answer.

Q. Has there been any reappearance of the President's cold?

MR. SALINGER: No; he is fine.

Q. Where is the President?

MR. SALINGER: He is in his office.

Q. Here?

MR. SALINGER: Yes.

Q. How late did he work last night?

MR. SALINGER: The President was working until about a quarter to two this morning.

Q. On this answer?

MR. SALINGER: On what?

Q. On the answer.

MR. SALINGER: On various things.

Q. In his office here?

MR. SALINGER: In his office and back at the House.

Q. May we assume, Mr. Salinger, that the Presidential reply to the Secretary General was perfected and put in final form at this meeting of the Security Council?

MR. SALINGER: No, I don't think you can make that assumption.

Q. Is that meeting still going on?

MR. SALINGER: No, it is over.

Q. How long?

MR. SALINGER: It lasted about an hour and -- well, it broke up about 11:30.

Q. Pierre, on that point, can you tell us whether this supplants the regular briefing that the President gets in the morning in his office?

MR. SALINGER: Yes, this does.

Q. What was the question?

MR. SALINGER: The question was whether this meeting of the Executive Committee of the NSC would be held

WALK ON LOOSE PAPER

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Q. Here?

MR. SALINGER: Yes.

Q. How late did he work last night?

MR. SALINGER: The President was working until about a quarter to two this morning.

Q. On this answer?

MR. SALINGER: On what?

Q. On the answer.

MR. SALINGER: On various things.

Q. In his office here?

MR. SALINGER: In his office and back at the House.

Q. May we assume, Mr. Salinger, that the Presidential reply to the Secretary General was perfected and put in final form at this meeting of the Security Council?

MR. SALINGER: No, I don't think you can make that assumption.

Q. Is that meeting still going on?

MR. SALINGER: No, it is over.

Q. How long?

MR. SALINGER: It lasted about an hour and -- well, it broke up about 11:30.

Q. Pierre, on that point, can you tell us whether this supplants the regular briefing that the President gets in the morning in his office?

MR. SALINGER: Yes, this does.

Q. What was the question?

MR. SALINGER: The question was whether this meeting of the Executive Committee of the NSC would supplant the President's usual intelligence briefing. He is getting his intelligence briefing at that meeting.

Q. When was the President back in his office this morning?

MR. SALINGER: Shortly after nine.

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Q. Has there been consideration of a summit meeting?

MR. SALINGER: I couldn't comment on that.

Q. Is there any White House consideration of the frontier battle in India?

MR. SALINGER: We have been watching that. I wouldn't have any more to say on it.

Q. Can you give us any indication of your future schedule today? Is there a lid? Will there be a lid?

MR. SALINGER: I think we can have a lunch lid. We can have a lunch lid until two o'clock.

Q. Has there been any communication from Nehru?

MR. SALINGER: Not that I am aware of.

Q. Could I ask a question on the record, Pierre? Is that your battle jacket dress?

MR. SALINGER: It is.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END